

# Downtown's better but there's a long way to go

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Macy's entire downtown Seattle store must be sold before it closes at the end of February

Downtown Seattle is in better shape today than a year ago, with many unauthorized encampments gone and the open dealing of drugs and stolen property having given way to a heavy police presence.

Summertime tourism bounced back and a record Alaska cruise season is on the horizon.

But workers have not fully returned to offices and may never do so as hybrid work has taken root. Streets in some sections of town are noticeably less busy on Mondays and Fridays but are filling back up in the middle of the week.

In his March 14 State of Downtown address, Downtown Seattle Association President and CEO Jon Scholes talked up the progress, including a drop in crime and a reduction in the number of tent encampments, which peaked at 146 in January 2021 to an average of 10 per month in the last half of 2022.

But citywide, Seattle saw more drug overdose deaths (1,184) from 2020-22 than Covid-19 deaths (837), according to Scholes, who said most overdose deaths these days are related to fentanyl.

"We have a pandemic on our hands, and we have to act with the same amount of urgency and focus that we deployed as we took on Covid," he said.